



# **Maryland Youth Advisory Council**

**Annual Report 2009-2010**

**Submitted to Governor Martin O'Malley and  
the Maryland General Assembly**

**By the Maryland Youth Advisory Council and  
the Governor's Office for Children**

\*The original work by Darwinek has been modified (flag-map of Maryland) [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Flag-map\\_of\\_Maryland.svg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Flag-map_of_Maryland.svg). This is published under the following license-Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 License <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/legalcode>

## **Maryland Youth Advisory Council Annual Report- Executive Summary**

2009-2010 marked the second year of the Maryland Youth Advisory Council (MYAC) since its creation by Senate Bill 1 during the 2008 legislative session. The 2009-2010 MYAC was comprised of 46 members representing 12 counties and Baltimore City, with 35 youth in high school and 11 youth in college (see Attachment 1 for the MYAC application). The Council strived to preserve geographic diversity among its members. The Council's first meeting was convened on November 21, 2009, and 7 general meetings were held between that date and the last meeting date of June 19, 2010. (See Attachment 2 for meeting notes).

At its first meeting, the Council re-elected Thomas Senecal as Youth Chair. The Youth Chair joined a representative from the Governor's Office for Children (Marina Finnegan), the Senate (Senator Mike Lenett), and the House (Delegate John Olszewski) for a total of four co-chairs. While the youth-elected Executive Board, (consisting of four members from each appointment category (Governor, Legislative, and Youth) elected by the youth of each category) was partially filled, the Executive Board played no role in this year's Council. The role of the Executive Board will need to be discussed and determined by future Councils. The Council also elected a Youth Vice Chair (Dennis Teegardin) and Secretary (Jordan Pelavin). Additionally, members formed and joined the Public Affairs Committee (chaired by Andrew Franklin) and/or the Legislative Affairs Committee (chaired by Edward Burroughs).

In April, the Council fulfilled the legislative education requirement by visiting the General Assembly during session and attending a meeting with Governor O'Malley to discuss the Council and a possible role for the Council with Baystat. The Council also heard from Senator Catherine Pugh, Deputy Majority Whip of the Maryland Senate, who provided insight on the political aspects of legislation.

The Council voted financial literacy education in public schools as the main legislative focus for the 2009-2010 year (introduced as SB 264/HB 764). The was in addition to a continued focus on Student Member of the Board of Education (SMOB)-related bills, including SB 536/HB 1287, which gave additional voting rights to the SMOB on the State Board of Education. SB 536/HB 1287 passed and was signed by the Governor, and SB 264/HB 764 passed the Senate but died in Committee in the House. (See Attachment 3).

In May of 2010, the Council hosted a second Youth Empowerment Forum and Mock Legislative Hearing on the issues of student financial literacy and the effectiveness of community service education requirements. The event was held in the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee room, featured a panel of stakeholders and issue experts, and provided the Council with feedback on both sides of the issues as well as potential approaches for future Councils to address these issues.

The final activities of the Council were primarily devoted to writing this Report and finalizing documents (by-laws and membership agreements) necessary to ensure a strong Council infrastructure. This report was written by the youth members of MYAC. The Council plans to learn from the many obstacles and experiences encountered this year to create an even stronger Maryland Youth Advisory Council for 2010-2011.

## **MYAC Council's Purpose**

As outlined in MYAC's parent bill, the Council is to:

- Hold at least four meetings a year
- Hold at least one public meeting on issues of importance to youth
- Recommend one legislative proposal
- Provide testimony before legislative bodies on youth issues
- Conduct a public awareness campaign to raise awareness about the Council among Maryland youth; and
- Provide an annual report to the Governor and the General Assembly

MYAC was able to fulfill each of its responsibilities through their subcommittees and social networking activities. The following sections describe these actions.

### **Legislative Affairs**

This year, the Youth Advisory Council supplanted the traditional educational meeting with a Council field trip to Annapolis. At the second MYAC General Meeting, members heard from Mr. Michael Hawkins of the Governor's Office for Children (GOC), who gave an overview of the legislative process based on his experiences both within the GOC and as a former staffer in Annapolis. Council members also heard from Senator Madelyn Pugh who provided a unique view of the Senate side of the legislative process.

At the second meeting, MYAC members voted on and selected legislative priorities for the year. The first priority was supporting mandatory financial literacy education in all Maryland public high schools. Second, the Council voted to continue its efforts to support full voting rights for Student Members of Boards of Education.

The financial literacy measures were introduced as SB 264/HB 764. The Council joined the Comptroller as well as a battery of non-profits in supporting this measure. The bill passed the Senate but died in the House. SB 536/HB 1287, which gave additional voting rights to the student member of the State Board of Education, passed both houses and was signed by the Governor. MYAC members provided both written and oral testimony in support of these bills.

In summary, while the Council was successful in passing one bill, great progress was made on the financial literacy front. It is the goal of the Council to support another effort for passage during the next session.

## Public Affairs

As outlined by its parent bill, a primary responsibility of the Maryland Youth Advisory Council is to organize and host a public forum discussing a legislative or doctrinal issue of particular relevance to Maryland's youth. This year the Council chose to use the forum to address the need for and current status of financial literacy programs within Maryland's schools as well as community service requirements within public schools. The hearing, entitled the Maryland Youth Empowerment Forum and Mock Legislative Hearing, was structured as a legislative hearing for the purpose of providing students in attendance a feeling for the infrastructure and proceedings of Maryland state government. MYAC was proud to host the event at the Miller State Building in Annapolis on May 22, 2010.

Specific planning for the hearing began prior to the April 17<sup>th</sup> MYAC meeting to honor an earlier determination that the invitation list and hearing panel should be available for discussion during the meeting. Securing a venue proved to be more difficult than previous years and there was a delay before the invitations were sent. Members of the Public Affairs committee worked to compile email contact lists of individuals to invite, including students involved in the Maryland Association of Student Councils (MASC), MSDE officials and school board members, a wide array of state legislators, past and current student board members, and other stakeholders in student advocacy and the state school system.

Once a time and date were solidified, members of the Public Affairs committee created an invitation (see attachment 3), which was approved via an online vote by MYAC members. It was decided that invitations were most efficiently issued via email. Members of the Public Affairs committee handled questions and responses electronically. Several weeks before the event, email invitations were sent and included a request for individuals to provide oral testimony at the hearing. Throughout this time, Council members worked to acquire prominent legislators, school board members, and public officials affiliated with the school system to act as the forum's mock legislators and serve on the panel to hear testimony and engage in discussion of the chosen legislative issue.

The panel consisted of six members: Thomas Senecal (MYAC Youth Co- Chair), Delegate John Olszewski (MYAC Co-Chair), Senator Mike Lennett (MYAC Co-Chair), Rosemary King Johnston (Executive Director, Governor's Office for Children), Ann E. Chafin (Assistant State Superintendent [MSDE]), and Dr. Allen Cox (Director of the MD Coalition for Financial Literacy). The panel provided diverse perspectives on the issue of student board members and catalyzed a dynamic and progressive discussion.

Attendance at the hearing was comprised of MYAC members. Before beginning testimony, an overview of the issue was provided. Five students who provided testimony were Jordan Pelavin, Molly Sinnott, Dennis Teegardin, Andrew Franklin, and Daniel Arias. Each spoke to the different ways in which both financial literacy and service programs could be improved within the existing structure.

Following each student's testimony, panel members were given time to ask questions, make statements about the presentation, and participate in a group discussion. These discussions examined many dimensions of the issues and included explorations of the economic and logistical implementation of programs meant to permanently change the existing structures for the benefit of Maryland youth. The panel anchored the hearing and the individuals who provided testimony were allowed to view the

policy-making process in action as legislators and public officials commented extensively on the challenges and costs of bringing about large scale sustainable programs.

MYAC was generally pleased with the proceedings and results of this hearing and felt it was productive and thought-provoking. However, the MYAC leadership was very disappointed in the lack of member turnout for the hearing, indicating an overall apathy amongst members to the work of the Council. Addressing this issue will be a primary concern for next year's council.

MYAC members also increased the awareness of the Council through social networking sites. There is a MYAC Yahoo Group and a MYAC Facebook page. In addition to the email invitations that were sent to all hearing invitees, hundreds of local students received Facebook invitations. This form of communication, though popular, did not improve attendance.

## **Issues Faced**

In addition to the Council's many successes during its second session, a number of obstacles were encountered.

The Council continues to face monetary issues as it was not appropriated any funds when Senate Bill 1 became law in 2008. Funding for the Council is essential for such activities as renting meeting locations, providing food during meetings, and/or reimbursement for members' travel expenses. Thanks to the generous support of the Council Co-Chairs, food was provided for all Council meetings. With regards to meeting locations, the Council creatively utilized free locations, including public libraries and college campuses. In addition, no money was provided for members' travel expenses. This issue needs to be remedied to ensure that all members have the resources needed to be in attendance.

Another issue the Council faced was the lack of full participation in MYAC meetings. This can be attributed to many factors. First, the lack of funding for travel expenses as previously stated. Second, House of Delegates appointees were not filled until months into the Council's session, preventing full representation as established by SB 1. This is an improvement from the Council's inaugural session where the House failed to make any appointments, however, the House needs to appoint its members in a timely manner prior to the convening of the Council. Lack of attendance also results in a lack of proper Council quorum, delaying the Council's ability to vote, discuss, and effectively work on issues, especially during the General Assembly's legislative session. An overall lack of member apathy was noted through late or no RSVP times for meetings, no-shows, and complete disengagement of many members. The Council recommends that aggressive changes be implemented by law or policy for next year's Council designed to increase member involvement and have the Council adopt the model recommended by non-profits such as the Forum for Youth Investment.

## **Next Steps**

Having completed our second session, the Council is eager to continue and improve upon our work. The Council will reconvene in October.

The Council hopes to continue working in the fields of financial literacy and SMOB voting rights. Additionally, the discussion at the Public Forum generated an interest in taking on community service requirements as a potential focus for the next Council.

The next Council will also need to actively work on keeping members engaged and involved. A stable source of funding has still not been identified, so grant and General Assembly funding sources will be investigated. We will also continue to work with the MYAC appointing agencies to ensure an interested and diverse Council membership.

Finally, with the initial infrastructure and Committees established and an earlier convening date, the Council was still not able to take as active a role in promoting itself as well as taking positions and lobbying for youth related matters during the 2010 General Assembly as was hoped. It will be a goal of next year's Council to implement recognized Youth Council best practices and, if necessary, reform the Council to fully engage its members and bring it to its full potential as the voice of Maryland's youth in the government.

## **MYAC Annual Report: Members**

**Chair:** Thomas Senecal, Prince George's County (Gubernatorial Appointee)

**Vice-Chair:** Dennis Teegardin, Worcester County (Gubernatorial Appointee)

**Secretary:** Jordan Pelavin, Prince George's County (Senate Appointee)

**Chair of Public Affairs Committee:** Andrew Franklin, Baltimore County

### **Gubernatorial Appointees:**

Stephen Nyitrai, Harford County  
Ocie Banks, Montgomery County  
Malcom Young, Charles County  
Deshuan Hill, Charles County  
Pallavi Jammi, Montgomery County  
Chante Bonner, Baltimore City  
Michelle Wangel, Worcester County  
Justin McLawhorn, Washington County  
Julio Jimenez, Howard County  
Daniel Arias, Montgomery County  
Jean Lee, Montgomery County  
Kathryn Henry, Baltimore County  
Michaela Vaporis, Baltimore County

### **Senate Appointees:**

Kathleen Woell, St Mary's County  
Alexandra Frosh, Montgomery County  
Ethan Kahn, Wicomico County  
Zachary Epps, Baltimore County

### **House Appointees:**

Martin Thompson, Anne Arundel County  
Loretta Ajogho, Prince George's County  
Collan Vaness, Wicomico County  
Ruqayyah Albaari, Howard County

### **Youth Appointees:**

Jonae Lloyd, Prince George's County  
Terri Orwenyo, Montgomery County  
David Murray, Prince George's County  
Matthew Cox, Carroll County  
Edward Burroughs, Prince George's County  
Timothy Hwang, Montgomery County  
Alan Xie, Montgomery County  
Josh Manley, Howard County  
Joseph Arankalayil, Montgomery County  
Nicholas Dahl, Carroll County  
Christopher Casey, Anne Arundel County  
David Guhl, Montgomery County  
Steven Wang, Washington County  
Molly Sinnott, Anne Arundel County  
Yoonjin Min, Howard County  
William Makell, Baltimore County  
Steve Glickman, Prince George's County  
Rachel Drozinski, Wicomico County  
Benjamin Turek, Montgomery County  
Nicholas Grieves, Harford County  
Lillian Ike, Prince George's County  
Matthew Popkin, Prince George's County



## Attachments

1. MYAC 2010-2011 Application
2. MYAC Minutes – 2009-2010
3. MYAC 2010 Youth Empowerment Forum Invitation

Attachment 1:  
MYAC 2010-2011 Application